

COMMENTARY

NEGOTIATING AN END TO THE COLD WAR

The Hazards

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IN THE British House of Commons debate on the conference "at the summit" the left-wing Labor MP, Konni Zilliacus, declared that the meeting of the heads of governments had achieved an "armistice in the cold war." This is undoubtedly the way in which the Communists regard the conference. In a shooting war an armistice means a suspension of actual hostilities, which may be followed by a negotiated peace treaty, may be merely a temporary truce followed by a resumption of fighting, or may be indefinitely prolonged—as in Korea—without any agreed settlement of the issues about which the war has been fought. An armistice in the cold war implies a cessation for the time being of the open menaces, insults, and denunciations which the term connotes; it does not, on the other

hand, involve any certainty, or even probability, of an agreed settlement of the basic conflicts between the free world and the states of the Sino-Soviet bloc. This situation was clearly recognized by Sir Anthony Eden in his television talk to the British people on his return from Geneva, when he declared: "I truly believe that this meeting at Geneva and the acceptance by the Russian leaders of my invitation here can open a new era. It has not done so yet, but it has made serious negotiations possible."

Such words of caution, however, have had little effect in the Western democracies as against the tidal wave of emotional confidence and optimism which has been flooding over the press and public opinion ever since the meeting of the Big Four. Although the conference reached no decision except to agree on a very vaguely worded agenda for the Foreign Ministers in October, it has brought about a universal sense of relaxation and *détente* just as if it had achieved a settlement of all the most important international issues at stake in the world today. To a great extent this result of the conference was an inevitable outcome of the Western governments' own insistence that the conference should be merely exploratory and not attempt to reach final decisions. With memories of Yalta and Potsdam in mind the Western statesmen were determined not to be placed

ON EVERY side in the free world, we see the evidences of a well-nigh overriding desire to have the cold war dissolved once and for all. The popular sentiment in the democracies for peace with the Sino-Soviet bloc found encouragement in the recent conference at Geneva of the heads of the governments of the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and France. Is such confidence justified, G. F. HUDSON asks. And will the Russian price for peace be the West's abandonment of its defensive alliances? Mr. Hudson, a frequent contributor, is a historian of international politics and an authority on the Far East.

this time in the position of having either to give way on vital points to Russian intransigence or allow the conference to break down; as it was, they were able at Geneva to conduct a debate on friendly terms without ever putting the new cordiality to the test of a crucial negotiation. But the price they have paid for this advantage is that their peoples have been profoundly misled by a superficial appearance of reconciliation and concord which has been achieved only because the real problems were shelved, and already the popular idea that the cold war is as good as over is making it more difficult for them to take up a firm position in the forthcoming negotiations of the Foreign Ministers or to maintain the "situation of strength" which has been built up with so much effort over the last few years.

It is not any concrete evidence of change in the fundamental policies of Communist Russia, but the highly publicized smiles and grins, the handshakes and back-slapping of the Soviet "new look," which have made so deep an impression on the public opinion, or rather the public sentiment, of Western countries. So far the only concessions of substance made from the Communist side have been agreement to the peace treaty with Austria, which Russia held up for years even after her own specific demands had been accepted, and the release by China as "pardoned criminals" of the eleven airmen who were detained and convicted contrary to international law and the terms of the Korean armistice, and were still held after the Secretary-General of the United Nations had humiliated the organization he represents by going to Peking to plead in vain on their behalf. On the most crucial issue of European politics, Russia has since the Geneva conference taken up officially a position which, unless it is drastically modified in negotiation, must render any agreement impossible except on a basis of outright appeasement by the West.

ALREADY at the conference itself the Russian representatives were able to get the unification of Germany linked with the

general question of European security; they can thus make German unification conditional not only on the withdrawal of West Germany from NATO, and neutralization of a future united Germany, but also on the dissolution of NATO itself, which is the proclaimed purpose of the Russian proposals for a European system of collective security. This is bad enough, for it indicates that the unity of Germany is not merely to be made dependent on a bargain for safeguarding Russia's own security in Eastern Europe—on which the Western powers are more than willing to negotiate—but is to be used as a lever to disintegrate the only organization which provides the non-Communist European nations with security against the power of Russia and her satellites.

But the statements made by the Soviet leaders in Berlin on their way home from Geneva showed that the promise of German reunification, even on acceptance of Russia's terms for European security, is nothing but a snare, for although the agreed directive to the Foreign Ministers speaks of Germany being unified through "free elections," Khrushchev declared in Berlin that the two "sovereign states" now existing in Germany could not be "mechanically unified" and that the working people of the German Democratic Republic would never consent to "the abrogation of all their political and social gains, to the liquidation of all their democratic changes." Such statements make nonsense of all talk about free elections in Germany, for the only possible meaning of free elections is that the all-German parliament emerging from them shall be empowered to legislate as it thinks fit for the whole of Germany. But the "political gains" which Khrushchev will not allow the "working people" of East Germany to abandon consist of the dictatorship of the German Communist party, the Communist control of the Volkspolizei and its military units, and the Communist monopoly of education, culture, and propaganda.

The Soviet statements plainly mean that the unity of Germany is to be brought about, not by allowing the entire German people to

choose democratically what kind of constitution and government it will have, but by amalgamating the two existing state systems in such a way that the Communist party and its officials will retain a special privileged position after unification, no matter how the popular voting may go. Such a Germany would certainly not be a democracy, for a democracy cannot be fused with a totalitarian state without losing its own essential character. Some political observers with backward glances into German history have been doubtful whether the institutions of political liberty have good chances of survival even in the area where they have been encouraged and protected by the Western post-war occupation; the prospect would be *nil* if the democracy of Bonn were to be merged with the undissolved dictatorship of the Pan-kow puppets.

IT WAS indeed another Khrushchev who was revealed in Berlin, no longer the political leader of a nation discussing its normal state interests with representatives of foreign powers, but the leader of international Communism taking a hand in the internal affairs of a country not his own in order to bolster up the power of his brother Communists, whom nobody supposes to be capable of winning a majority in free all-German elections. At Geneva there was a tacit agreement to avoid ideology and treat all matters of dispute as concerned with the purely external relations of states. Marshal Bulganin thus stated Soviet policy:

"We have always been in favor of peace among the peoples and of peaceful co-existence between all nations, irrespective of their internal systems, irrespective of whether the state concerned is a monarchy or a republic, whether it is capitalist or socialist, because the social and economic system existing in any country is the internal affair of its people."

In Berlin, however, Russia speaks with a different voice; the party regime set up in the former Soviet occupation zone is to be regarded not as the internal affair of the German people but as a Russian interest to be

maintained whether a majority of the German people want it or not. At Geneva the Russian leaders professed complete indifference to the success or failure of Communist revolutions in other countries; in Berlin they made it clear that they are determined to preserve the power of the Communist party either as the government of a part of Germany or as an element built into the state structure of a united Germany.

This resolve in one way or another to thwart national freedom of choice in the second largest country of Europe must be viewed in relation to the Russian demand for the dissolution of NATO and the "withdrawal of foreign troops from the territories of European countries"—that is to say, the removal of all American forces and bases from the European side of the Atlantic. The basic power situation in Europe is after all a very simple one. The Soviet Union is overwhelmingly the most powerful single state in Europe, and it has in addition to its own resources the support of a group of satellite states whose governments were placed in power by Russian arms and are bound to Moscow by ties of common faith and political dependence. This bloc must dominate Europe decisively unless it is counterbalanced by a firm alliance of the great majority of the non-Communist European nations reinforced by the power of the United States, not merely as a potential supplement to, but as an integral component of, their system of common defense. Such an organization has in fact been created and has provided the nations of Western Europe with the degree of security they now possess. It is naturally the aim of the rulers of the Soviet Union to pull down the structure which alone stands between them and the absolute hegemony of Europe. If they could obtain a dissolution of NATO, if they could persuade the United States to withdraw its forces across the Atlantic, and if they could at the same time unify Germany on terms which would make it ungovernable without Communist participation, then Europe would be theirs and no European nation would be able to withstand their demands.

The Soviet government apparently hopes to achieve these ends by high pressure salesmanship with an abundance of good-will gestures and honeyed peace talk suddenly turned on after a period when the peoples of the world have been scared out of their wits by the possibility of a war waged with hydrogen bombs. In an atmosphere of abruptly relaxed emotional tension they think perhaps that they can get by with proposals designed to divest the free world of its common defense. Marshal Bulganin in his press conference speech after the close of the conference said that "security" had been the most important question discussed at the conference. So from the Soviet point of view it was, but what the Marshal had in mind was not what Western peoples understand by security. Like so many other words, it means in the Marxist-Leninist language something quite different. Just as the German Democratic Republic is that part of Germany in which there is no democracy, so the Soviet proposal for replacing "military groupings of some European nations directed against others" with a collective security system of all European nations is merely a demand that the free peoples renounce the security they already have. All they are offered in return is that, if the West will definitely discard its alliances, Russia may be willing later on to permit the existence of a unified Germany, half-totalitarian and half-free.

A BARGAIN on the lines indicated is not one that can be seriously contemplated by responsible Western statesmen. The unity of Germany is desirable, but it would be bought at too high a price by any weakening, let alone the abolition, of NATO. The unity of Germany on the terms indicated by Bulganin and Khrushchev in Berlin is not even desirable. There have, nevertheless, been ominous signs that the Western powers may not be able to maintain a resolute solidarity on these matters. M. Faure caused consternation in the American and British delegations at Geneva by a sentence in which he virtually accepted the Soviet thesis by saying that the Western and Eastern security systems

could be merged into one; he had not included this sentence in the draft he showed to his American and British partners, nor had he consulted his own foreign minister about it. No irreparable harm was done, but the incident seemed to reveal a French disposition to have it both ways: to stand in line with Britain and America and at the same time to make separate bids for Soviet favor by gestures of appeasement. In view of the national disunity on foreign policy which was manifest in the parliamentary struggle for ratification of the Paris agreements, it is difficult to feel confidence that France may not have some unpleasant surprises in store for her allies when the new Soviet diplomatic offensive reaches its full intensity.

Apart from possible wavering in the attitude of France, Britain and the United States are likely to be subjected in the coming months to two kinds of pressure which will make it very difficult for them to stand firm in negotiation on European questions. The first pressure will be from the German national desire for reunification at almost any price; the second from the new mood of trustfulness towards the Soviet Union in Western countries and the popular craving for an agreed settlement on almost any terms.

In Germany the Geneva conference has already weakened the position of Adenauer and his supporters, who have brought Germany into NATO and have refused to have anything to do with the Pieck republic. Although it is the Western powers who were pressing at Geneva for immediate German reunification and the Soviet leaders who were opposing it, it has become clearer than ever before that reunification can only come about at the will of Russia, and that Russia will only grant it on substantially her own terms. Up to now there has been a fairly widespread confidence in West Germany that the Western powers, having attained a position of strength, would somehow be able to persuade the Russians to abandon the Pieck republic and allow Germany to be united on the basis of free elections. But it has now been made plain that Russia has no intention of doing anything of the kind and

that the Western powers are powerless to alter her purpose. It only remains, therefore, for the Germans to respond to the Russian bid for direct negotiations between Moscow and Bonn.

Adenauer himself may resist the Russian demands—which will certainly include a “reconciliation” between the West and East German states as equal participants in the making of a new Germany—but he is in danger of becoming increasingly isolated as West German opinion is tempted by specious and highly publicized Soviet promises into compromises with the East German Communist dictatorship. In any case there is only one Adenauer and he is an old man; there is nobody else in sight in German politics who can be expected to show a similar strength of character and European outlook in the years ahead. Political wisdom has not been a characteristic of the German people in modern times, and the bait of German national unity is likely to have a compulsive effect stronger than any other considerations. If German opinion thus gradually moves towards acceptance of Russian terms, the Western powers will be put in a dilemma: either they must go along with it or else they must risk alienating German opinion by insisting on conditions which will delay German reunification indefinitely.

THE pressure for making concessions to which the British and American governments are likely soon to be subjected on their own home fronts can be even more destructive of their will to resist Soviet demands. Public opinion in Western countries, deeply moved by fears of thermo-nuclear warfare and now convinced of Russian sincerity in seeking an end of the cold war, will not easily resign itself to the disappointment of the high hopes that have been raised by the Geneva conference; if the forthcoming negotiations on concrete issues run into new deadlocks, public opinion in the West will complain that unimportant points of detail are being allowed to stand in the way of the peaceful settlement which everybody wants; it will demand that talks must at all costs

be prevented from breaking down, and it will expect the Western statesmen to come home with signed agreements. The Western peoples yearn for settlements, not merely an armistice in the cold war, and they can exert pressures which no democratic government can ignore, least of all an American president and his party in an election year. The Soviet government, on the other hand, is under no corresponding compulsion to seek a settlement at a price it is unwilling to pay, and consequently it has an immense advantage for bargaining in a so-called “atmosphere of good will.” As a party dictatorship it does not depend on the votes of its people and it can manipulate public opinion to almost any extent required through its monopoly of education, propaganda, and news. If the negotiations of the Foreign Ministers are deadlocked, there can be no voice raised in any Communist country to suggest that Molotov is being too stubborn. The Soviet press, indeed, while acclaiming the new relations of friendship with the Western powers, has carefully explained that the Western willingness to confer has been due, not to their governments’ desire for reconciliation, but to the popular agitation worked up by the Communist-sponsored “Partisans of Peace”; it follows that any setback to negotiations will simply mean that the imperialist warmongers have again got the upper hand.

When Eden said that the Geneva conference had “made serious negotiations possible,” he was undoubtedly assuming—an assumption naturally made in the British Foreign Office and the State Department—that, an atmosphere of good will conducive to negotiation having been created, the Western representatives would come to the conference table to play their hands assured of the same sustained support from their peoples that they have had for resisting the blockade of Berlin or building NATO. Unfortunately for this assumption, there are signs that the atmosphere of good will is already weakening the strength of purpose that they must have behind them if they are to succeed in “serious negotiation.” It is automatically creating a situation in which the Soviet leaders are

likely to get a great deal of what they want without having to pay any price for it at all.

The state of mind known as "appeasement" is not really an exceptional phenomenon for which some political clique can be held responsible; it is the normal attitude of a liberal democracy when confronted with a totalitarian power. The initial impulse is always to avoid conflict, to make concessions, to withdraw from exposed positions, to give the disturber of the peace the benefit of every doubt and to lean over backward in consideration of his point of view. This mood prevails as long as the totalitarian leadership does not go beyond a certain point in truculence or open aggression; when it does and the democracy becomes convinced that further appeasement can only lead to disaster, there is a transition to resistance and organized defense. Unfortunately the change of attitude tends to come too late to retrieve the situation without either a war or an extreme tension verging on war.

Twice in the last two decades has democratic appeasement been turned to resistance, and in each case aggressive blackmail and *coups de force* had won immense successes before the stand was made. Hitler, exploiting British appeasement, had an uninterrupted run of success until his seizure of Prague in March 1939, and then the momentum of the Nazi expansion was such that it could not be stopped without a world war. Stalin, exploiting American appeasement, made vast gains for the Soviet Union and for Communism at the end of the war, but he also in the end overplayed his hand and produced a recoil of American policy with the Truman Doctrine similar to the recoil of British policy against Hitler in the spring of 1939. This time, however, the Western stand did not produce a shooting war; the blockade of Berlin, which was the great trial of strength, never developed into armed hostilities. In the Far East, where the Truman Doctrine was not applied until 1950, the attempt to curb Communist expansion did produce a shooting war, but it was kept limited to Korea and ended in a draw. Both in Europe and the Far East the Western pow-

ers, in spite of the furious denunciations of such action by Communists, Peace Partisans, and Nehru and his followers, organized systems of common defense marking strategic boundaries not to be crossed without war, and Communist expansion (except in Indo-China) was brought to a halt. So the second cycle of Western appeasement and resistance reached a situation of stalemate, with the high political tension which has come to be known as the "cold war," but without any prospect for the Sino-Soviet bloc to advance further except by risking a general war in which America would have a superiority in atomic weapons. Meanwhile Russia has been suffering economically from the bar on trade in strategic materials, and politically from the counter-offensive of radio broadcasting from the West.

WHAT was there to do from a Communist point of view but to go back to the tactics and slogans of 1945 and try to recreate in America the mood of trustfulness and appeasement from which Russia had drawn such rich dividends before the icy blasts of the cold war had chilled the warm and gullible generosity of Rooseveltian idealism? It must have been clear to Stalin's successors that insults and threats were no longer getting them anywhere; the grim faces of steel-hardened cadres and rock-ribbed Stalinists were opening no doors, but merely rallying the peoples and governments of the West in a resolve to close their ranks, increase their armaments, and tighten their alliances. It could not do any harm to try the effect of smiling instead. So we are to begin all over again and wipe out the memory of the past; if anything went wrong with Soviet-American relations on the Soviet side—and it may be difficult to persuade Americans that the fault was entirely on *their* side—then it was all due to Stalin, or better still, to Beria, and cannot be attributed to Krushchev and Bulganin, who are now ready to smile until their jaws ache.

But what in reality has changed in Russia? There has been a slight relaxation of the extreme rigors of the regime; the powers of the

secret police have been somewhat restricted; the mortality in the forced-labor camps is not what it was. But the basic fact of Communist party dictatorship and its universal thought-control remains unaltered, and if Stalin himself is dead, the men now in power are those whom he selected and promoted and who were the accomplices of his tyranny. The Marxist-Leninist doctrine, with its theme of ultimately irreconcilable conflict between two worlds, remains the faith of Russia, of Communist China, and of Communist parties throughout the world. As recently as May of this year, Marshal Biryuzov wrote in the *Young Communist*—and a special pamphlet developing the same argument was being circulated for the instruction of junior army officers:

"Our support for the Peace Partisans does not mean that we are against all war. That would be a bourgeois pacifist attitude. We

are against imperialist war, since that is counter-revolutionary war. But we are in favor of a liberating, anti-imperialist, revolutionary war. . . ."

The Western liberal may distinguish between wars as defensive or aggressive and hope for an international order which would outlaw aggression as such, by whomsoever it was committed. But for Communists the only two kinds of war are those mentioned by Marshal Biryuzov in the passage quoted above, and as long as such is the teaching which the Soviet Union gives to its younger generation, there can be no sense in pretending that we have a common conception of peaceful coexistence. By all means let us have whatever friendly contacts we can with the lands of Communism, but let us get it clear in our own minds that the defensive alliances of the nations of the free world are not negotiable.